

UNAPPROVED

## MINUTES

### SPECIAL SELECTMEN'S MEETING

@North Haven Memorial Town Hall Conference Room #1

APRIL 23, 2009

9:30 a.m.

A special meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by First Selectman, Janet M. McCarty. Also present were Stephen A. Fontana, Second Selectman, and Michael J. Freda, Third Selectman.

Ms. McCarty explained that the purpose of this meeting was to sign a call for the Annual Budget Town Meeting, to be held on Tuesday, May 11, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the North Haven High School, 221 Elm Street, North Haven. Resolutions to be discussed at the May 11, 2009 Annual Budget Town Meeting and to appear on the ballot at the May 19, 2009 Referendum:

#### RESOLVED:

1. "Shall the Town of North Haven, in accordance with the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, **repeal** the existing *Chapter 30, Ethics, Code of* from the Ordinances of the Town of North Haven in its entirety and **adopt** the Ordinance entitled *Chapter 30 Ethics, Code of (2009)?*"
2. "Subject to approval of the proposed 2009-2010 budget at the May 19, 2009 Referendum, shall the Town of North Haven, in accordance with the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, accept a Federal SAFER Grant to partially fund the implementation of a paramedic program in the North Haven Fire Department?"
3. "Shall the Town of North Haven, in accordance with the recommendation of the Board of Finance approve and adopt a budget consisting of \$43,505,647 for the Board of Education and \$37,933,369 for the Town Government; for a total amount of \$81,439,016 for the fiscal year July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010?"

At this time, there were public comments relative to the agenda.

Robert Wechsler, 16 Windsor Road, asked if there was a finalized version of the Code of Ethics.

Miriam Brody, 500 Elm Street #15-4, asked how a vote can be taken on a new Code of Ethics at a town meeting if a vote had not been taken by the Board of Selectmen.

Veronica Kivela, 70 Drazen Drive, asked if a "yes" vote meant a vote for the new code in its entirety.

Mr. Freda asked if the code being presented was dramatically different from the March 6, 2008 code presented by the Ethics Review Committee. He was also concerned that there would not be enough time for the public to comment before the Annual Town Meeting.

Ms. McCarty stated that a vote will be taken at the May 7th Regular Board of Selectmen's meeting. She noted that the Code of Ethics that will be presented is basically the same as presented by the Ethics Review Committee, but is being reviewed by the town attorneys because state statutes had to be considered and redundancies had to be addressed for the final version. The revised Code of Ethics will be available to the public next Tuesday at the Town Clerk's office and on the Town Website. There will be an opportunity for the Selectmen to comment at their next regular meeting before a vote is taken and for the public to comment at the Annual Town Meeting on May 11th before the vote at Referendum on May 19th. It was pointed out that the proposal was available to the public and on the town website for a year. Mr. Fontana noted that a public hearing to discuss the proposal had taken place in December 2008.

Mr. Freda asked why the vote for the paramedic program was being tied to the budget. He stated that voters should have the choice whether to implement the paramedic program separately from their vote on the budget. Ms. McCarty explained that the paramedic program will cost the town money even with the grants and savings of overtime. If the budget goes down, there will be cuts. She stated that it does not make sense for the Board of Finance to cut programs on one hand and implement new programs on the other. Ms. McCarty explained that she is giving the public the opportunity to voice their desire for the paramedic program, but wanted to make sure everyone understands what the financial impact will be over the next five years with the Town assuming more of the cost. She noted that a paramedic program had been requested under the previous administrations but was met with opposition from the administration and Board of Finance, and public input was never requested at any level. She noted that five calls have come into the office as a result of the letter sent by the Firefighters Association asking for support of the paramedic program. Mr. Fontana explained that it is important that the voters understand the consequences of their vote and to vote in the context of what the Town can afford. He explained that other programs will be impacted if the budget goes down. Mr. Freda explained that he supports the paramedic program but will vote against the resolution because of the wording and the linkage of the paramedic program to the passage of the budget.

Ms. McCarty stated that the resolutions could be voted on together as one or voted on separately if any member of the Board preferred. Mr. Freda stated he preferred the questions be voted on separately. Mr. Fontana made a motion to vote on the resolutions separately.

Voted: McCarty – yes, Fontana – yes, Freda – yes

Resolution 1. Voted: McCarty – yes, Fontana – yes, Freda – yes

Resolution 2. Voted: McCarty – yes, Fontana – yes, Freda – no

Resolution 3. Voted: McCarty – yes, Fontana – yes, Freda – yes

Mr. Fontana made a motion to sign a Call for the Annual Budget Town Meeting to be held on Monday, May 11, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium of the North Haven High School, 221 Elm Street, North Haven, CT 06473. Referendum to be held on Tuesday, May 19, 2009.

Voted: McCarty – yes, Fontana – yes, Freda – yes

The Board entertained comments from the public.

Ann Ruocco, 23 Ansonia Drive, objected to the wording of the resolutions tying the approval of the paramedic program to passage of the budget. She felt that it pressured people to vote “yes” on the budget. Mr. Fontana explained that no one is being pressured in their vote and can vote separately on each question. But he explained that the votes can not be considered in isolation. The budget will be impacted by the implementation of a paramedic program and voters need to have this in mind when they vote; if the budget is defeated further cuts will be made and it does not make sense to then implement new programs if the voters feel the budget is too high. Mrs. Ruocco stated that we are getting millions from CRRRA that will be going into the fund balance. She stated we should have a Special Town Meeting, let the people vote on this issue separately from the budget, and take the money from the fund balance if it passes.

Donald Clark, 32 North Hill Road, asked if cuts are required if the budget is voted down. Ms. McCarty explained that the town attorneys are researching the issue. During the past administrations, the town residents were always told that cuts would be required if the budget was voted down. Mr. Clark also asked if we can attach hiring paramedics to the budget question, why not also have a question regarding the six teaching positions and the Public Works position that are being eliminated. Ms. McCarty explained that the Board of Finance does cut the Education budget, but the Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Education determines where the cuts will be made. The question on the ballot regarding the paramedic program addresses whether the town should accept the grant money to fund the program. There will be savings in overtime expenses for the Fire Department if the paramedic program is implemented due to the increase in personnel. The Board of Finance transferred \$250,000 from the overtime budget into the contingency fund. If the paramedic program is not implemented the funds from the contingency fund will be used to pay for overtime. The position in Public Works was eliminated and funds were not restored for the position.

Veronica Kivela, 70 Drazen Drive, asked how we can have paramedics and vote “No” on the budget? Ms. McCarty again explained that if the vote is “Yes” on both, we can have the paramedic program. The program involves hiring four new firefighters and will involve almost \$700,000 of Town funds over the next five years. She stated that she supports the program but if the budget goes down, she cannot support the program when the budget would be cut further. If the budget is voted down, the town may not be ready for this program due to the cost.

Ms. McCarty explained that the breakdown of expenses for the paramedic program will be available at each polling place as well as in the Town Clerk’s office, and on the town website. Jeff Obier, President of the North Haven Firefighters Association, noted that the expenses relating to the paramedic program are also available on the NHFA website.

Phil James, 39 Susan Lane, asked if the information will be available at the Town Meeting. He stated that we are fortunate to be awarded this grant and inquired if we will suffer in the future if we do not accept it. Ms. McCarty explained that there were a number of other towns that were offered this grant before North Haven and refused to take it for lack of town funds to match the grant amount.

Miriam Brody, 500 Elm Street #15-4, asked if three separate questions will be on the ballot at Referendum. She also asked what will happen if the Code of Ethics did not pass. Ms. McCarty stated that three separate questions will appear on the ballot. She also explained that if the New Code of Ethics did not pass, after additional input from the public, it will be reworked and returned to the Board of Selectmen for a vote.

There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. McCarty moved for adjournment at 10:13a.m.

Voted: McCarty – yes, Fontana – yes, Freda – yes